DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 479 CS 506 830

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TITLE Criteria of Quality in Local Television Newscasts: News Directors' and Educators' Views.
PUB DATE Aug 89
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (72nd, Washington, DC, August 10-13, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Evaluation Criteria; *News Media; *News Reporting; Surveys; *Television
IDENTIFIERS Journalism Educators; Local Media; *Media Coverage; News Directors; *Television News

ABSTRACT

A study surveyed local news directors and journalism educators to determine their criteria of quality in local television newscasts. Respondents to the survey conducted in 1982 (192 out of 635 local news directors and 46 out of 167 journalism educators) and to a later survey conducted in 1988 (85 out of 551 news directors and 70 out of 265 journalism educators) answered one open-ended question--what did respondents consider criteria for quality in television newscasts. Responses were quantified using a coding scheme involving 19 variables. Results indicated that both groups seemed to be calling for ethical journalists who can write well while providing in-depth coverage. Results also indicated that both groups in 1988 cared more about news anchors being journalists than about anchors' persona/performance skills. (Eighty-nine notes are included and one table of data is attached.) (RS)

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CRITERIA OF QUALITY IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWSCASTS
News Directors' and Educators' Views

by

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Paper prepared for the Radio-Television Journalism Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, annual convention, Washington, D.C., August 10-13, 1989.

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CRITERIA OF QUALITY IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWSCASTS
News Directors' and Educators' Views

The question of what is "quality" in local television newscasts is one that has triggered debate amongst those involved in reporting the news and those who consume it. Researchers' attempts at answering the question have taken a number of paths. Dissecting a newscast by the types of news stories it contains has been one method. In their content analyses of various local newscasts, some have used accepted journalistic standards as yardsticks of excellence. Others have argued that determining what is best often involves subjectivity; thus audience perceptions must be included in studies of quality.

In their content analysis of New York City television news, Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti calculated the time spent in 13 categories: hard news, feature, human interest, commercial, sports, weather, review, editorial, promotion of upcoming item, interaction, opening or closing, financial and fill time. The authors found that even with "happy talk," WABC's Eyewitness News format devoted slightly more time to hard news than did its competitors.[1]

Wulfemeyer developed what he called the "CIEBWUS categories:" commercials, issues, entertainment, banter, weather, unexpected events, and sports. But he decided not to assess quality only by percentage of time devoted to each of his categories; he assigned each a weight based on the results of a survey of audience interest in the categories.[2]

However, Roberts and Dickson wrote that "audience generated data should not be used in formulating a definition of quality since in essence it is nothing more than a measure of popularity."[3] In their study

assessing quality in local news, they applied a three-part test: a content analysis (based on kinds of stories), an audience analysis of what kinds of stories are important, and an "outside-the-market" viewer perception of anchors. This gave them both a journalistic-based analysis of quality and an audience-based quality study.

Finally, Carroll hypothesized that content values would vary with market size. And indeed he found that "small market stations depended more on anticipated news and preplanned events."[4]

This study attempts to define what is quality in local newscasts based on the perceptions of both local news directors and journalism educators. Especially in light of the Roper Study,[5] it was felt it would be at the least interesting and at the most important to see what criteria both groups posited.

METHODOLOGY

This study began in the fall of 1982, when Mitchell and colleagues (not the present co-author) sent surveys to 635 local news directors (both affiliates and independent stations) and 167 members of the Radio-TV Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). The questionnaire asked one open-ended question--what did respondents consider criteria for quality in a television newscast. The point was to find out their criteria, not to lead them to and through a set of criteria. This format had previously been used by Kennedy and Mitchell in a study assessing quality in newspapers.[6] After two mailings, news directors returned 192 usable responses, a return rate of 30.2%. Educators returned 46 usable responses, a return rate of

27.7%. Due to the departures of co-researchers, the study was never completed. In 1988, the current authors sent a mailing to 551 local news directors (affiliates only) and 265 members of the Radio-TV Division of the AEJMC. After two mailings, the return rate for news directors was 15.4% (85 usable responses.) Educators return rate was 30% (70 usable responses).

One can only speculate about the low rate of return from news directors in 1988. In their answers, several 1988 news directors expressed frustration over attempting to answer the number of surveys sent to them, perhaps pointing to a "survey burnout." "Everyone wants only a moment of our time. Enough already," one news director wrote.[7] Another said that she objects "to the increasing frequency of surveys from journalism students and schools."[8] CBS in New York returned a "form card" to "Dear Sir or Madam." It said that "there are so many such questionnaires currently being circulated that to reply to all would be both onerous and time-consuming."[9] Some criticized the open-ended question. One news director said that he did not answer the first mailing after "exasperated realization that it was virtually unanswerable in its current form."[10] But he did, nevertheless, answer the second. The authors are glad. His thoughtful answer was quoted twice. While the open-ended question does pose some problems, it also allows a richness in response that is virtually unobtainable otherwise. That richness is evident throughout our "Findings and Discussion" section.

To quantify the responses, a coding scheme was worked up using nineteen variables. Training on the meaning of those variables was held before coding. After one revision of the coding scheme, intercoder

reliability was 80%.

HYPOTHESES--QUALITY IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS

Nineteen hypotheses were generated. For both the first and second surveys (those from 1982-83 and those from 1988), the hypotheses fell into four groupings: those relating to content, those relating to production values, those relating to the characteristics and performance of the newsroom talent and staff, and those relating to economic factors. Additionally, the authors posited hypotheses concerning what changes they expected to see between the first and second surveys.

HYPOTHESES THAT PERTAIN TO BOTH THE FIRST AND SECOND SURVEYS

Hypotheses Relating to Content:

1) Both news directors and educators would strongly emphasize writing.*

2) Both news directors and educators would emphasize depth of coverage.

3) Both news directors and educators would emphasize covering important stories.

4) News directors would emphasize covering stories that are interesting more than educators would.

5) News directors would emphasize accuracy and ethical considerations more than educators would.

6) News directors would emphasize having a mix of stories within a newscast more than educators would.

7) Educators would emphasize a more serious tone (to the newscast in general) and "less fluff" in the news than news directors would.

*Emphasis = proportional number of mentions.

Hypotheses Relating to Production Values

8) News directors would emphasize visuals more than educators would.

9) News directors would emphasize sound more than educators would.

10) News directors would emphasize tape editing more than educators would.

11) News directors would emphasize a technically "clean" newscast more than educators would.

12) News directors would emphasize the use of the new technologies (live units, satellite news gathering, special effects, electronic graphics, etc.) more than educators would.

Hypotheses Relating to Newsroom Talent and Staff

13) Both news directors and educators would emphasize anchors' journalistic skills.

14) News directors would emphasize anchors' persona/performance skills more than educators would.

15) News directors would emphasize reporters' news-gathering skills more than educators would.

Hypotheses Relating to Management and Economic Factors

16) News directors would emphasize economic factors more than educators would.

HYPOTHESES RELATING TO DIFFERENCES IN FIRST AND SECOND SURVEY RESULTS

17) The 1988 respondents would emphasize the new technologies more than the 1982-83 respondents did.

18) News directors responding in 1988 would emphasize economic factors more than the 1982-83 respondents did.

19) News directors responding in 1988 would emphasize community involvement (having journalists who knew more about and cared more about the community) more than the 1982-83 respondents did.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis #1--Supported. That a quality newscast must contain good writing was ranked number one by news directors and educators in both surveys. However, the percentage of mentions by educators in both surveys (52.9% in 1988 and 47.8 % in 1982-83) was lower than the authors expected. (See Table 1.) News directors mentioned writing far more frequently (74.1% in 1988 and 60.4% in 1982-83).

Many of the prescriptions for good writing were terse. A list included: "Concise,"[11] "devoid of cliches,"[12] "active voice over passive whenever possible."[13] A news director cautioned that if the journalist could not master writing "simple declarative sentences, you won't last long in my newsroom."[14] Both news directors and educators frequently mentioned writing for the ear and recommended that journalists read their work aloud.

Clear and understandable writing was also mentioned often. "If it's a story on a medical breakthrough, have they presented it in such as manner that both a petroleum geologist and his cleaning lady would understand it?" a news director asked.[15] "So often the TV story raises more questions than it answers," an educator lamented.[16] But do not oversimplify, cautioned another news director. "News departments should begin treating the viewing audience as intelligent adults. Oversimplifying or condescending to 'make the story easier to understand' only adds confusion to complex issues."[17] And there was considerable concern that before a journalist could write a clear story about a complex

issue, he or she must truly understand that issue. "If you don't know the story...you can't write the story."[18]

If a good writer needs to know what to put in a script, he/she also needs to know what to leave out, according to some respondents. "Cursed with so little time to tell so much, we compress, compress, and compress again," a news director said.[19] And sometimes good writing means letting other elements besides words tell the story. "A good newsman knows when to give his piece air, to open it up and let it breath."[20] And good writing means that what is said is "directly related to what the viewer is seeing (sometimes audio and video stray too much from each other)."[21]

That the news should be written in a "conversational" manner was frequently mentioned. "Is the newscast presented in a way as one friend might talk to another friend...we are talking to people, not at them."[22] But an educator warned, "In an effort to be 'conversational' broadcast news writing often extends informality to incorrect usage."[23]

Incorrect usage and such problems as poor spelling, etc. were also on high many lists of writing problems. An educator suggested that "there should be a supervisory producer checking every script for grammar, poor word selection, spelling, syntax, usage, and all the rest."[24] Ironically, there were some obvious grammatical and spelling errors in responses from both groups. Wrote a news director, "Short of bad grammer, our writing should be as conversational as possible." And an educator said that he could be quoted, "but be sure that I didn't misspell anything." (Not to worry...this paper has been thoroughly checked and any errors are most certainly typoes!)

Hypothesis #2--Supported. But clearly educators were more concerned

with the depth of coverage. They mentioned it in 45.6% of their answers (rank #3) while news directors mentioned it in 28.9% of theirs (rank #7). And there were some interesting changes over time. Educators in 1988 mentioned depth of coverage significantly more times in 1988 than in 1982-83 (50% versus 39.2%). New directors' number of mentions dropped (32.3% in 1982-83 versus 21.2% in 1988).

Educators charged that TV journalists should be doing more than "just following the papers."[25] "Peek below the pleasant veneer of community life," said another.[26] "It's frighteningly easy to put together a good looking newscast filled with good looking but otherwise hollow stories," a news director added.[27] "Depth may often be the biggest challenge," another echoed.[28]

What did respondents pose as possible reasons for shallow reporting? "Too many lazy reporters who walk a shallow story line," a news director said.[29] An educator fingered local television assignment editors who "are more inclined to ship crews off to the 'exciting' visual event than to let a reporter research a complicated issue."[30] Underdeveloped stories occur because of "emphasis on story count rather than story content."[31] Still others blamed the length of time given to individual stories. "Too many times we cannot say everything about a story in a minute fifteen."[32] Some respondents saw a lack of depth as a function of the high turnover rate in the business. "One of the biggest problems with local t.v. news is a lack of a sense of history. Most stories appear as discreet events void of all continuity."[33]

How to get depth into news coverage? A number of respondents charged that television journalists had to make better efforts at reporting "the

'why' of the story. Television has always been so consumed with the 'who, what, and where.'"[34] Some commented that journalists can't merely look for two sides but for "multiple views and perspectives."[35] This might also include sidebar stories and "better follow-up--too many important stories are left hanging."[36] And news executives have to encourage digging: "Are there stories that show original research, rather than simple repetitiveness of handout/pack 'journalism?'"[37] "Explain the Social Security system, explain the Federal Reserve system, explain the confusing system we have for nuclear protection."[38] "It should be intense coverage of issues affecting people and their human rights, their livelihood, their health, their sense of community."[39]

Some called for regular investigative reporting. This educator also wrote that news should inform and/or educate: "If TV news takes too lightly its opportunities to inform, I fear a high percentage who get all their information from the tube will become irresponsible citizens."[40]

Hypothesis #3--Supported. The composites of news directors and educators for both surveys (33.6% for news directors [rank #4] and 36.2% for educators [rank #5]) show that professionals and academics emphasize covering important stories. However, educators' mentions of important stories more than doubled in the later survey (45.7% in 1988 versus 21.7% in 1982-83; rank #4 as compared to a tie for #7). News director mentions remained fairly constant (30.6% in 1988 versus 34.9% in 1982-83); however important stories moved up in rank (#4 in 1988 versus #6 in 1982-83.)

Two themes seemed to dominate responses about important coverage. The first was selection of stories that were beyond "event-oriented" journalism. "As I travel the country, I see far too few local news shops

willing to go beyond basic coverage of news conferences, meetings, spot news," an educator wrote.[41] Another educator drew an analogy between coverage of important stories and a long-distance telephone conversation with one's mother: "When she asks 'what's new?' or 'what is going on?' she doesn't deserve to hear about every rape, every murder or every wreck in your community. She needs to hear what is important."[42]

So what is "important?" An educator wrote that a socially responsible news operation "must present movements of significance to the community...What is a community doing about unemployment? About the environment? About youth development?"[43] Another called for "trend analysis/interpretative stories."[44] A news director, while recognizing that he had to cover the events of the day, said the news has to be "pro-active...anticipating or recognizing larger issues and/or problems that are unique to the audience and that are shaping their lives."[45] "I want to know how events and issues affect me and my fellow human beings. Too often, very little of what is presented as 'news' affects me."[46]

Which brings us to the second predominant theme...news that affects people. While academics sometimes mentioned this, news directors often did so. The responses showed that news directors used such phrases as "stories that affect the viewer," "stories that are meaningful to the viewer," "the people angle," or "the human side" more than 80 times. Because of the way the answers were phrased, not all were coded in the importance category. (For example, if respondents clearly defined "news you can use," that could include new ways to rid your pet of fleas. Those answers were not coded under importance.) But clearly, news directors wanted story selection and coverage done with people in mind. For some,

selection was based in part on "how many people are affected by the stories contained within a newscast?"[47] "The question that I find most helpful in determining the stories we'll cover is 'Who cares?' If I can't identify any relatively large group that would be impacted in some way, I would be wasting air time."[48]

On story coverage, a news director gave this example. "Two news reporters cover a governor's 'State of the State' address. One simply does a recap of the governor's words...the other takes the governor's message and relates it to the local people it affects. The first reporter took the easy way out."[49]

Two responses seemed to sum up educators' and news directors' views on news coverage that is important. "Too often, viewers can say, 'So what?' after a newscast, and that is unforgivable."[50] "It (content) should stimulate public discussion of ideas and notions about who we are, where we came from, and where we are headed."[51]

Hypothesis #4--Supported. News directors did emphasize interest more than educators, but neither group gave it great emphasis. In the composites for both surveys, news directors mentioned interest 13.4% of the time (rank #12) while educators mentioned it 7.8% of the time (rank #17).

Interesting content was discussed both as it relates to story selection and to presentation. The classic discussion of giving the viewer what he or she needs to know versus what he or she wants to know arose. One educator bemoaned "the tendency of viewers seeming to prefer an emphasis on dramatic and humorous entertainment, rather than on significant news values ... In short, supply us with what we need to be

responsible members of our community rather than what we seem to want."[52] But others commented that, along with the news important to the community, "if something unusual or entertaining happens, that should be reported too."[53] A number of respondents, both news directors and educators, called for interesting presentation. A television news director wrote, "if a meal looks lousy, you'll never taste it. The same applies to a local newscast. You can present all of the substance you want, but if it doesn't have style in the presentation, no one will taste it."[54] Another wrote that "it is no longer ok to bore the pants off the viewer."[55]

Hypothesis #5--Not supported. The assumption was that news directors would see credibility as vital to a news organization and therefore would emphasize accuracy and the ethical considerations that contribute to credibility more than educators would. But the composite figures of both surveys show that the two groups mentioned these factors about the same number of times (39.4% or rank #3 for news directors and 40.5% or rank #4 for educators). And in fact in the 1988 survey, educators mentioned accuracy and other ethical considerations more than news directors did (41.4% versus 36.5%).

Of accuracy, one news director said, "If a news organization blows this one, they've blown it all."[56] "Nothing else much matters if the stories are not accurate," wrote an educator.[57] Other ethical considerations often referred to included "objectivity" and "fairness." And one news director implored that "the subjects of our reports be treated with dignity, no matter how they are portrayed, and not used as 'objects' in our desire to have juicy stories. These are ethical considerations."[58]

Hypothesis #6--Not supported. It was educators who talked more about having a mix of stories and a balance of stories in a newscast. (In the composites for both surveys, educators mentioned a mix of stories 20.7% of the time [rank #10] and news directors mentioned it 9.7% of the time [rank #16]).

If educators outnumbered news directors in calling for a mix of stories, news directors were more detailed in defining what they meant. "A sense of balance is needed. In every city there are rapes and murders and drugs, but most people aren't addicted criminals...there are also many good people doing good deeds and their stories, too, should be found and find their way into the broadcast to offset the image of massive mayhem."[59] And another news director, who was also a university educator, wrote: "Depending on the time allotted, a good balance. Serious/light, features for young/old etc. There is a mentality in the business that the journalist must maintain a confrontational posture for every subject. That's just not true! We can let our hair down occasionally and show that life doesn't have to be as tough as we constantly present it."[60]

Hypothesis #7--Supported. In the composite figures for both surveys, educators more frequently called for a more serious tone to the newscast and less fluff in it (12.9%, rank #13 versus news directors, 8.3%, rank #17). But figures for the individual surveys revealed variations. In the 1982-83 survey, news directors mentioned a serious tone/no fluff in 11.5% of the responses (rank #15). In 1988, news directors' percentage of responses on that subject fell to 1.2% (rank #19). (Perhaps news directors feel that they have made improvements in that area?)

Some respondents linked fluff stories to inappropriate entertainment in the news. One educator saw a different path by which fluff gets into our news. One of his criteria for a quality newscast was "longer news programs only where the market will support them and where the staff is competent to put longer pieces together--not where the extra time is used for features or fluff."[61]

In their comments, educators often referred to "happy talk." "Much time is wasted on local news when the anchors are encouraged to 'show personality' and 'develop the chemistry,'" one wrote.[62]

Hypothesis #8--Supported. In the composites of both surveys, news directors mentioned visuals more than educators (54.9% versus 46.6%). But visuals ranked #2 for both groups, and it is evident that for both a quality newscast contains good visuals.

"Photographers should get back to the basics--they should shoot sequences of shots rather than random pictures," an educator wrote.[63] Another emphasized that "too many 'standuppers' are done against uninformative backgrounds. The walls of city hall do not an informing visual make. Choose background action--a parade in progress, the rush of jets lifting off the runway, the crowds lined up at the airport, the workers leaving the plant."[64] And if people are central to important and interesting stories, they also are central to good visuals. "Shots must be clean and simple and focus on images which reflect the story in 'people terms,'" a news director wrote.[65] And some cautioned against "meeting footage." "We never open a 'meeting' story with a shot of the meeting. We open with pictures of what the meeting is about. When the city council debates housing, we show the housing... If the subject is schools, we show

schools."[66]

Some described video as a conveyor of content. "Quality in television news is demonstrated by video that can tell the story without the reporter," according to a news director.[67] " A viewer should be able to turn down the set and still get the gist of the story," another wrote.[68] Some cautioned, however, against letting a lack of video determine whether a story is newsworthy. "For years, we've found that if you can't take a picture of it, it ain't news. There needs to be more attention to putting on readers, even if you don't have tape. Much important news is passed over because we don't have pictures to go with it."[69]

Hypothesis #9--Supported. In the composites for both surveys, news directors mentioned sound in 11.9% of the responses (rank #14) while educators mentioned it 8.6% of the time (tied for rank #15). In the 1988 survey, however, it is educators who say more about sound (10% to 7.1%). But with our relatively small rate of return, the only thing that can be said with certainty is that neither group put much emphasis on this aspect of television news. When it was mentioned, respondents most often referred to including good "natural sound" in television packages.

Hypothesis #10--Supported. News directors mentioned tape editing more overall (15.9% versus 12.9%) but educators mentioned it more in 1988 (12.9% versus 11.8%). Again, neither group emphasized editing strongly.

Hypothesis #11--Supported. In the composites for both surveys, news directors mentioned a technically "clean" newscast in 20.9% of their responses (rank #8). Educators mentioned it in 13.8% of theirs (tied for rank #11.) Educators mentioned a "clean" newscast much less frequently in

1988 than they did in 1982-83 (8.6% versus 21.7%). Also in the 1988 survey, news directors' mentions of a "clean" cast outnumbered educators by nearly two-to-one (16.5% versus 8.6%).

One news director could have been speaking for several when he said: "Professional execution by the army of support people (director, technical director, audio, chyron, tape operators, etc.). Technical errors not only annoy the viewer, they call into question the credibility of the content (if they can't get the right tape on, why should I believe what they're saying?)."[70]

Hypothesis #12--Supported. In the composites of both surveys, news directors mentioned the new technologies nearly twice as often as educators did (10.1% versus 5.2%). But in the 1988 survey, educators mentioned them virtually the same number of times as news directors (7.1% versus 8.2%). However, in the overall picture, neither group emphasized the new technologies, something that surprised the authors. And the mentions tended to be negative; they focused on misuse.

One educator called for "live reports when they add to the story only--not just to prove that you have a live truck."[71] "No technology abuse: No gratuitous live shots from the Channel H Sky-Eye Star Satellite/Helipad Truck," wrote a news director.[72] "Often times, these Bells and Whistles are misused, overshadowing the content. That is a mistake. But if the technology is used correctly, they can enhance the content and make the information much more interesting and easy to understand," another news director said.[73]

Hypothesis #13--Supported. Both groups emphasized that they wanted anchors who are journalists, but educators mentioned this more often. (In

the composites for both surveys, educators mentioned it in 26.7% of their responses [rank #7] versus 18.1% for news directors [rank #9]). And there was a change over time; both groups mentioned anchors as journalists many more times in the 1988 survey than in 1982-83. Educators' mentions more than doubled. (1988 educators 34.3% versus 1982-83 educators 15.2%; 1988 news directors 21.2% versus 1982-83 news directors 16.7%).

"A quality newscast is one anchored by quality journalists who are involved in the community they serve," a news director wrote.[74] An educator said he wanted "anchorpeople who go out and report once in a while."[75] Another asked for "journalists, not entertainers, with full understanding of the traditions, responsibilities, legal implications, etc." and who also possess pleasing presentational skills.[76] A news director observed that "too many anchors at the local level are too young, too cute and too bent on serving themselves rather than their audience. Many times their eyes reveal that they don't really understand the significance of what they're reading off that teleprompter."[77]

Hypothesis #14--Supported. The composites of both surveys show that news directors mentioned anchors' persona/performance skills in 32.5% of their responses (rank #5) versus 25% for educators (rank #8). And there was a change over time.: In the 1982-83 survey, news directors mentioned anchors' persona/performance skills in 38.5% of their responses, while educators mentioned those in 39.1% of their responses. But in the 1988 survey, the percentage of responses from both groups was halved (18.8% for news directors and 15.7% for educators). Looking back at Hypothesis #13 (concerning anchors as journalists), exactly the opposite occurred. Clearly both news directors and educators are calling for seasoned anchors

who have paid their journalistic dues.

In terms of an anchor's persona and performance skills, one educator is looking for on-air talent who are "human and, at least, somewhat sincere. Television can be a personal medium. Why not take advantage of that? Instead--and this certainly isn't a new complaint--local TV news in particular gives us blow-dried blondes and game show-style anchors feigning Concern About the Viewers' Need to Know."[78] "Those on camera must be genuine," another educator agreed.[79] They should also have "poise" and be "comfortable anchoring so the viewer can focus on the news stories, not on the foibles of the anchor."[80] And if anchors do not have to be glamorous, they do have to be "presentable and likeable...they can't turn people off either."[81] According to one news director, "The number one cause for viewer disenchantment is on-camera staff that is not perceived as desirable to invite into one's home."[82]

Hypothesis #15--Supported. In the composites of both surveys, news directors mention reporters' news-gathering skills in 31.8% of the responses (rank #6) versus 21.6% for educators (rank #9). But in the 1988 survey, news directors mentioned reporters less frequently than in 1982-83 (23.5% [rank #5] versus 35.4% [rank #5]). And in the 1988 survey, educators' mentions increased from 1982-83 (25.7% [rank #8] versus 15.2 % [tied for rank #10]). The responses that called for the reporting of significant or important stories were coded under "important content." Remembering that it is reporters who do the reporting, that coupled with this hypothesis' figures, show that both news directors and educators find good reporters essential to a quality newscast.

In fact, one news executive wrote that "quality news starts with

reporters. They have to know and feel what's going on and when to alert their editors. They have to have an instinct for looking beyond the obvious, the soundbite, the staged event or breaking police story."[83] An educator bemoaned reporters who couldn't look beyond the obvious or break away from what had become routine. "Reporters all too often use only soundbites which could be obtained easily. They should strive to collect the soundbites that contribute to the information of the story. Reporter should get away from formulas---not every story needs a standup."[84]

Others wrote about a reporter doing his homework; digging; enterprising. "To me, quality is also reflected by the reporters' ability to follow up local stories and generate new ones. There is a potential story on every street."[85] But a news director emphasized that reporters must really know those streets to do quality work. "The 'revolving door' syndrome in broadcast journalism has always been one of our biggest burdens. Thoughtful, knowledgeable and comprehensive reporting cannot take place if the reporters have only been in the community for six months and are already looking for another job."[86]

Hypothesis #16--Not supported. News directors did not mention management support and other economic factors more than educators. In fact, educators mentioned it nearly twice as frequently. (Composite figures were 13.8% [tied for rank #11] for educators and 7.2% [rank #18] for news directors.) Overall, both groups mentioned this relatively few times. This surprised the authors. With the recent retrenchment in local news staffs widely talked about, more discussion of how this relates to quality in news was expected.

Hypothesis #17--Not supported. The authors had expected that by 1988

more stations would have acquired live units, special effects and electronic graphics packages and would be more apt to comment on the impact of these on the newscast. But in 1988, both news directors and educators mentioned the new technologies in 7.7% of their responses as compared to 9.2% in 1982-83.

Hypothesis #18--Not supported. There was a small increase in the number of times news directors talked about economic factors in the 1988 survey. But with the low rate of return, it is speculative at best to place any significance in this. Again, this was a surprise to the authors for reasons noted during the discussion of Hypothesis #16.

Hypothesis #19--Supported. Although they did not emphasize it, news directors cited journalists' involvement in their community more than three times more frequently in 1988 than in 1982-83 (5.9% [rank #18] versus 1.6% [rank #19]). Still, in the overall picture, the number of mentions was small.

A news director wrote that "a tradition and reputation for community involvement mean that people think of the station when they have a good story. It's important to become involved in the community and to care about what happens in it."[87]

CONCLUSIONS

A rank ordering of the 1988 top ten criteria for quality news by news directors and educators:

News Directors	Educators
1. Writing	1. Writing
2. Visuals	2. Depth of Coverage
3. Accuracy/Ethics	3. Visuals
4. Importance	4. Importance

5. Reporters	5. Accuracy/Ethics
6. Anchor as Journalists	6. Miscellaneous
6. Depth of Coverage	7. Anchors as Journalists
8. Miscellaneous	8. Reporters
8. Anchors' Persona & Performance	9. Story Mix
10. Technically "Clean" Cast	10. Anchors' Persona & Performance

The lists are quite similar. Both groups seem to be calling for ethical journalists who can write well while providing in-depth coverage. And good visuals are an important part of those stories. As noted earlier, educators much more frequently mentioned depth of coverage and covering important stories than did news directors. They also stressed having anchors who are journalists more than did news directors. And educators asked for a serious tone/no fluff in the newscast many more times than news directors.

But news directors also stressed depth of coverage, covering important stories and anchors as journalists. They also mentioned good writing in more than one-third more of their responses than did educators.

The rank orderings of news directors' criteria over time:

News Directors 1988	News Directors 1982-83
1. Writing	1. Writing
2. Visuals	2. Visuals
3. Accuracy/Ethics	3. Accuracy/Ethics
4. Importance	4. Anchors' Persona & Performance
5. Reporters	5. Reporters
6. Anchors as Journalists	6. Importance
6. Depth of Coverage	7. Depth of Coverage
8. Miscellaneous	8. "Clean" Cast
8. Anchors' Persona & Performance	9. Editing
10. "Clean" Cast	10. Anchors as Journalists

Clearly, the greater number of mentions (74.1% in 1988 versus 60.4% in 1982-83) shows that writing is not only of major concern to new directors but is of growing concern. And the rankings show a flip in regard to

anchors. In the earlier survey, news directors mentioned anchors' persona and performance skills many more times than they did anchors as journalists. In the 1988 survey, just the opposite was true. This may indicate a shift from appearance to content.

The rank orderings of educators' criteria over time:

Educators - 1988		Educators - 1982-83	
1.	Writing	1.	Writing
2.	Depth of Coverage	2.	Visuals
3.	Visuals	3.	Depth of Coverage
4.	Importance	4.	Accuracy/Ethics
5.	Accuracy/Ethics	4.	Anchors' Persona & Performance
6.	Miscellaneous	6.	Importance
7.	Anchors as Journalists	6.	"Clean" Cast
8.	Reporters	6.	Story Mix
9.	Story Mix	9.	Anchor as Journalists
10.	Anchors' Persona & Performance	9.	Reporters
		9.	Pacing and Flow
		9.	New Technologies

Clearly, by both rankings and percentages (50% in 1988 versus 39.2% in 1982-83), educators are concerned about and want more depth in news coverage. They also are calling for coverage of more important stories; that criterion moved up two spots in ranking and more than doubled in the number of mentions (45.7% in 1988 versus 21.7% in 1982-83). And as in the case of news directors, educators in 1988 cared more about anchors who are journalists than about anchors' persona/performance skills. The number of mentions of anchors as journalists more than doubled (34.3% in 1988 versus 15.2% in 1982-83) while the number of mentions of anchors' persona/performance skills was less than half as many (15.7% in 1988 versus 39.1% in 1982-83.)

What could not be coded was the spirit with which many news directors and educators attacked the two surveys' question....many of them writing

pages of criteria. A news director ended his essay on quality in local news by writing, "Thank God I still feel I do some of this, even if not nearly enough."[88] And an educator wrote, "I have enjoyed this catharsis. Thanks for asking!"[89]

TABLE 1 - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY

	N.D. '88 (n=85)		Ed. '88 (n=70)		N.D. '82-3 (n=192)		Ed. '82-3 (n=46)		N.D. (Com.) (n=277)		Ed. (Com.) (n=116)	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
CONTENT/Writing	74.1	1	52.9	1	60.4	1	47.8	1	64.6	1	50.9	1
CONTENT/Depth of Coverage	21.2	6*	50.0	2	32.3	7	39.2	3	28.9	7	45.6	3
CONTENT/Importance	30.6	4	45.7	4	34.9	6	21.7	7*	33.6	4	36.2	5
CONTENT/Interest	15.3	11	7.1	17*	12.5	14	8.7	16	13.4	12	7.8	17
CONTENT/Accuracy/Ethics	36.5	3	41.4	5	40.6	3	39.1	4*	39.4	3	40.5	4
CONTENT/Mix of Stories	10.6	14	20.0	9	9.4	17	21.7	7*	9.7	16	20.7	10
CONTENT/Serious Tone	1.2	19	14.3	11	11.5	15	10.9	15	8.3	17	12.9	13*
PRODUCTION/Visuals	54.1	2	47.1	3	55.2	2	45.7	2	54.9	2	46.6	2
PRODUCTION/Sound	7.1	17	10.0	14	14.0	12	6.5	17	11.9	14	8.6	15*
PRODUCTION/Editing	11.8	13	12.9	12	17.7	9	13.0	14	15.9	11	12.9	13*
PRODUCTION/"Clean" Cast	16.5	10	8.6	15	22.9	8	21.7	7*	20.9	8	13.8	11*
PRODUCTION/New Technologies	8.2	16	7.1	17*	10.9	16	2.2	19	10.1	15	5.2	19
TALENT/Anchors as Journalists	21.2	6*	34.3	7	16.7	10	15.2	10*	18.1	9	26.7	7
TALENT/Anchors' Persona & Performance	18.8	8*	15.7	10	38.5	4	39.1	4*	32.5	5	25.0	8
TALENT/Reporters	23.5	5	25.7	8	35.4	5	15.2	10*	31.8	6	21.6	9
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT	8.3	15	12.8	13	6.8	18	15.2	10*	7.2	18	13.8	11*
OTHER/Community Involvement	5.9	18	8.5	16	1.6	19	4.3	18	2.9	19	6.9	18
OTHER/Pacing and Flow	12.9	12	2.6	19	13.0	13	15.2	10*	13.0	13	8.6	15*
MISCELLANEOUS	18.8	8*	37.1	6	15.6	11	23.9	6	16.6	10	31.9	6

*Denotes ties

NOTES

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5. The Roper Organization Inc., "Electronic Media Career Preparation Study," The Roper Organization Inc., 1-69 (1987).

6. Samuel V. Kennedy III and John D. Mitchell, "Criteria of Daily Newspaper Quality: Editors' and Educators' Views," Presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual convention, 1-13 (August 1981).

7. Don Marion, KXXV-TV (1988 survey).

8. Marselis Parsons, WCAX-TV (1988 survey).

9. Allen Y. Shaklan, CBS Television Stations (1988 survey).

10. Paul Paolicelli, KPRC-TV (1988 survey).

11. Mark Banks, Marquette University (1982-83 survey).

12. Roland Kelly, WSBT-TV (1988 survey).

13. Robert H. Wicks, Indiana University (1988 survey).

14. Jim Bennett, WINK-TV (1982-83 survey).

15. Lynn Walker, KAUZ-TV (1982-83 survey).

16. Bosworth Johnson, Marshall University (1982-83 survey).

17. Paul Lara, KCEN-TV (1988 survey).

18. Mike Beecher, KFVS-TV (1988 survey).

19. Greg Lefevre, KSEE-TV (1982-83 survey).

20. Jim Bennett, WINK-TV (1982-83 survey).

21. William Montravelle Folger, University of Northern Colorado (1982-83 survey).

22. Unsigned (1882-83 survey).

23. Ralph Renick, WTVJ-TV (1982-83).

24. R.H. MacDonald, Washington and Lee University (1988 survey).

25. Bill Smith, Northeastern University (1988 survey).

26. Mark D. Harmon, Texas Tech (1988 survey).

27. Rick Bradfield, KWTX-TV (1988 survey).

28. Mary C. McCarthy, WDSU-TV (1988 survey).

29. Bob Campbell, WTHR-TV (1982-83 survey).

30. Rod Gelatt, University of Missouri (1988 survey).

31. Ralph J. Bardgett, Central Missouri State University (1988 survey).

32. David Vincent, WLOX-TV (1982-83 survey).

33. Cal Wasson, KAIT-TV (1982-83 survey).

34. Steve Murphy, WOWT-TV (1988 survey).

35. John D. Callaway, WTTW-TV (1982-83 survey).

36. Mark Banks, Marquette University (1982-83 survey).

37. Dr. Richard Alan Nelson, University of Houston (1988 survey).

38. Steve Hess, KCPQ-TV (1982-83).

39. Mike Beecher, KFVS-TV (1988 survey).

40. Dr. Hal Fisher, Bowling Green State University (1988 survey).

41. Jeremy Harris Lipschultz, University of Nebraska at Omaha (1988 survey).

42. Dr. Millard F. Eiland, Prairie View A&M University (1988 survey).

43. Mark Fackler, University of Minnesota (1982-83 survey).

44. Jim Bernstein, University of Oregon (1988 survey).

45. Joe Corcoran, KCAU-TV (1988 survey).

46. Tim Wulfemeyer, University of Hawaii-Manoa (1982-83 survey).

47. Gary Pozsik, WOLO-TV (1982-83 survey).

48. Chuck Whitten, KESQ-TV (1982-83 survey).

49. Steven Fetveit, KECI-TV (1982-83 survey).

50. Tim Wulfemeyer, San Diego State University (1988 survey).

51. J. Michael Beecher, KTIV-TV (1982-83 survey).

52. Dr. Lee J. Dudek, University of South Carolina (1988 survey)

53. Gale Wiley, University of Texas (1988 survey).

54. Kevin Brennan, WVUE-TV (1988 survey).

55. Stuart Kellogg, KTVY-TV (1988 survey).

56. Steven Fetveit, KECI-TV (1982-83 survey).

57. Dana Ulloth, Bloomsburg University (1988 survey).

58. Richard Rose, KDUH-TV (1982-83 survey).

59. Paul Paolicelli, KPRC-TV (1988 survey).

60. David Spiceland, KACU-TV (1982-83 survey).

61. Ron MacDonald, Washington & Lee University (1982-83 survey).

62. Terrence E. Finnegan, University of Illinois (1988 survey).

63. Robert H. Wicks, Indiana University (1988 survey).

64. Al Porte, St. Cloud Technical Institute (1988 survey).

65. Ken Coy, KSEE-TV (1988 survey).

66. Greg LeFevre, KSEE-TV (1982-83 survey).

67. Mike Michalak, WJFW-TV (1988 survey).

68. Gary Anderson, WIS-TV (1982-83 survey).

69. Jon S. Janes, KFVS-TV (1982-83 survey).

70. Bill Payer, KTUL-TV (1988 survey).

71. Dr. Roger Klein, University of Pittsburgh (1988 survey).

72. Stella Shelton, WWAY-TV (1988 survey).

73. Douglas Drew, KTSP-TV (1988 survey).

74. S. Peter Neumann, WEAR-TV (1988 survey).

75. David B. Dick, University of Kentucky (1988 survey).

76. Ed Mullins, University of Alabama (1988 survey).

77. Dan Schillinger, KEVN-TV (1988 survey).

78. Brad Nason, Lycoming College (1988 survey).

79. Dr. Hal Fisher, Bowling Green State University (1988 survey).

80. Roger Gadley, KNDO-TV (1988 survey).

81. Bonnie Wheeler, WSIL-TV (1988 survey).

82. Walt Brown, KERO-TV (1988 survey).

83. Paul Paolicelli, KPRC-TV (1988 survey).

84. Robert H. Wicks, Indiana University (1988 survey).

85. Rich Snyder, WEVU-TV (1982-83 survey).

86. Steve Murphy, WOWT-TV (1988 survey).

87. Susan Anderson, KTWO-TV (1988 survey).

88. Van Carter, KTIV-TV (1988 survey).

89. Dr. Millard F. Eiland, Prairie View A&M University (1988 survey).